

# University Hospitals of Cleveland

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UNIVERSITY CIRCLE / CLEVELAND, OHIO 44106 / TELEPHONE: 791-7300

August 20, 1970

Mr. William B. Lewis  
Chairman of the Board  
American Cancer Society  
219 East 42nd Street  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Lewis,

I have read the correspondence which exchanged earlier this year between you and Mr. Joseph F. Cullman III, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Tobacco Institute, Inc. I agree with many of the arguments raised by Mr. Cullman, and feel that the American Cancer Society has erred in its public handling of this matter.

The essential point I wish to make is that it is wrong for a prestigious organization like the American Cancer Society to make public statements, conclusions and recommendations based on unpublished observations. As you point out in your letter of April 17, 1970, these observations should be "judged in the traditional manner of American science, where findings are presented, discussed, accepted or rejected by scientists and physicians whose only motivation is the truth." However an additional tradition in American science is that the observation be published, a procedure which entails preliminary evaluation by the Editors and Reviewers of the scientific publication to whom the paper is submitted. This critical review before publication sometimes results in revision or even rejection of the original manuscript.

If the data have been published, and you then editorialize about them, others will have access to the same material for rebuttal opinions. But if you editorialize when no one else has access to the data, then you may properly be accused of unjustified manipulation for publicity purposes, improper use of scientific data not yet validated by proper publication procedures, and untoward bias.

Since you have editorialized, and the data are not accessible, then the request by the Tobacco Institute, Inc. to review the data does not seem so unreasonable. Obviously, the whole controversy could have been avoided had you withheld comment until publication had been achieved.

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Finally, I am astonished at the tone of hostility and defensiveness in your letter of April 17, 1970 to Mr. Cullen. I would have thought <sup>here</sup> ~~that~~ your suggestion that the Tobacco Institute repeat the study, rather than

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review the data, is an attempt at droll humor, and does not represent your considered judgment.

I am not in the employment of the tobacco industry. I do not own stocks or bonds in tobacco companies. I personally believe that the deleterious effects of smoking are well established by correlation in human studies, and that the direct demonstration of cancer production in other animals may or may not prove applicable to humans. I do not do research on cancer or the effects of smoking. I quit smoking myself five years ago, based on clinical evidence available then, and have not regretted it. Therefore, I do not have any personal stake in the outcome of this study. I do feel strongly enough about the potential evils of prepublication publicity to write this letter.

Sincerely

Kent H. Johnston, M.D.  
Instructor in Surgery  
Case Western Reserve University

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